CLAIMS:

1. A method for modeling a two-way conversation between a computer-based character and a user, the method comprising:

storing situation data that defines a set of situation tags and associated situation text, wherein the situation tags represent situations that describe contexts in which the user interacts with the character;

storing character data that defines a set of character tags and associated character text, wherein the character tags define a set of computer-based characters;

storing a behavior pattern that defines a conversation between the user and the character, wherein the behavior pattern is represented as a set of linked frames that specify respective text-based dialogue between the character and the user, wherein the text-based dialogue includes embedded media tags selected from the situation tags and the character tags; and

modeling a two-way conversation between the user and the character within the online environment by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames with the situation text and the character text in accordance with the media tags defined within the frames.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising

storing the behavior pattern as one of a set of behavior patterns;

wherein generating a two-way conversation comprises:

selecting one of the situations, one of the characters and one of the behavior patterns; and

modeling the two-way conversation by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the selected behavior pattern with the situation text of the selected situation and the character text of the selected character.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the text-based dialog of each of the frames defines: (a) text-based dialogue to present to the user from the character, and (b) response dialogue from the user to the character.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein modeling the two-way conversation further comprises:

selecting a current one of the frames of the behavior pattern

presenting the text-based dialogue from the character to the user; and

presenting the response dialogue from a plurality of the frames to the user for selection as a plurality of choices.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein modeling the two-way conversation further comprises:

receiving a selection from the user in response to the response dialogue from the plurality of the frames.

selecting a new current frame of the behavior pattern based on the selection.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the frames of the behavior pattern comprises a set of fixed pointers to other frames within the behavior pattern, and generating a two-way conversation comprises traversing the pointers of the linked frames based on the selection received from the user at each of the frames.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising:

storing the behavior pattern as one of a set of behavior patterns, wherein each of the behavior patterns define a series of interactions during which the computer-based character interacts with the user in accordance with a consistent attitude toward the user;

updating a set of relationship variables based on the selection, wherein the relationship variables represent the character's attitude toward the user by the computer-based character; and

selecting a second behavior pattern for the character as a function of the updated relationship variables when the first behavior pattern has been traversed.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising

storing character-specific media of the computer-based character; and

displaying character-specific media with the dialogue generated for each frame of the modeled conversation.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the character-specific media comprises a set of photographs associated with the computer-based character.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising presenting the modeled conversation to the user via a computer network.

11. A computer-readable medium comprising instruction to cause a computer to model a two-way conversation between a computer-based character and a user by:

storing situation data that defines a set of situation tags and associated situation text, wherein the situation tags represent situations that describe contexts in which the user interacts with the character;

storing character data that defines a set of character tags and associated character text, wherein the character tags define a set of computer-based characters;

storing a behavior pattern that defines a conversation between the user and the character, wherein the behavior pattern is represented as a set of linked frames that specify respective text-based dialogue between the character and the user, wherein the text-based dialogue includes embedded media tags selected from the situation tags and the character tags; and

modeling a two-way conversation between the user and the character within the online environment by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames with the situation text and the character text in accordance with the media tags defined within the frames.

12. The computer-readable medium of claim 11, further comprising instructions to cause the processor to model the two-way conversation by:

storing the behavior pattern as one of a set of behavior patterns, and

wherein generating a two-way conversation comprises:

selecting one of the situations, one of the characters and one of the behavior patterns; and

modeling the two-way conversation by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the selected behavior pattern with the situation text of the selected situation and the character text of the selected character.

13. A system comprising:

a database to store:

(a) situation data that defines a set of situation tags and associated situation text, wherein the situation tags represent situations that describe contexts in which the user interacts with the character,

(b) character data that defines a set of character tags and associated character text, wherein the character tags define a set of computer-based characters, and

(c) a behavior pattern that defines a conversation between the user and the character, wherein the behavior pattern is represented as a set of linked frames that specify respective text-based dialogue between the character and the user, wherein the text-based dialogue includes embedded media tags selected from the situation tags and the character tags;

a computer coupled to the database; and

a software engine executing on the computer, wherein the software engine models a two-way conversation between a user and a character by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames with the situation text and the character text in accordance with the media tags defined within the frames.

14. The system of claim 13, further comprising a client device, wherein the computer communicates the modeled conversation to the client device via a computer network for presentment to the user.

15. The system of claim 13, wherein the database stores the behavior pattern as one of a set of behavior patterns, and the software engine generates the two-way conversation by:

selecting one of the situations, one of the characters and one of the behavior patterns from the database; and

merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the selected behavior pattern with the situation text of the selected situation and the character text of the selected character.

16. The system of claim 13, wherein the text-based dialog of each of the frames defines: (a) text-based dialogue to present to the user from the character, and (b) response dialogue from the user to the character.

17 The system of claim 16, wherein the software engine selects a current one of the frames of the behavior pattern, presents the text-based dialogue from the character to the user, and presents the response dialogue from a plurality of the frames to the user for selection as a plurality of choices.

18 The system of claim 17, wherein the software engine receives a selection from the user in response to the response dialogue from the plurality of the frames, and selects a new current frame of the behavior model based on the selection.

19. The system of claim 18 wherein the database stores each of the frames of the behavior pattern to include a set of fixed pointers to other frames within the behavior pattern, and the software engine generates the two-way conversation by traversing the pointers of the linked frames based on the selection received from the user at each of the frames.

20. The system of claim 13,

wherein the database stores the behavior pattern as one of a set of behavior patterns, wherein each of the behavior patterns define a series of interactions during

which the computer-based character interacts with the user in accordance with a consistent attitude toward the user, and

wherein the software engine updates a set of relationship variables based on the selection, wherein the relationship variables represent the character's attitude toward the user by the computer-based character, and selects a second behavior pattern for the character as a functions of the updated relationship variables when the first behavior pattern has been traversed.